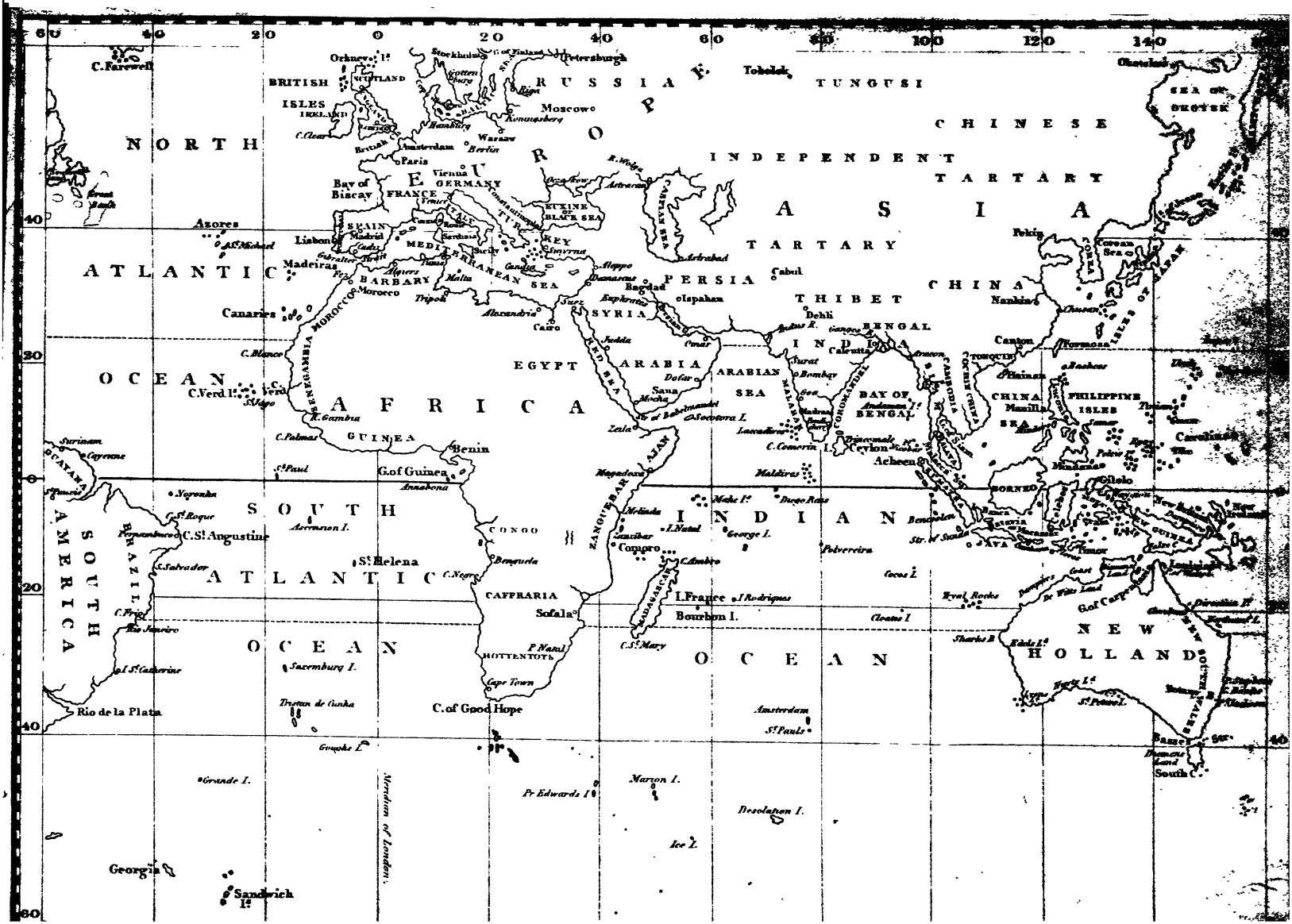
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ORIENTAL COMMERCE;

CONTAINING

A GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

OF THE PRINCIPAL PLACES IN

The East Indies, China, and Japan,

WITH

Their Produce, Manufactures, and Trade,

INCLUDING THE COASTING OR COUNTRY TRADE FROM PORT TO PORT,

ALSO

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE TRADE

OF THE VARIOUS

EUROPEAN NATIONS WITH THE EASTERN WORLD,

PARTICULARLY THAT OF THE

ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY,

FROM THE

DISCOVERY OF THE PASSAGE ROUND THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

TO THE

PRESENT PERIOD;

WITH

An Account of the Company's Establishments, Revenues, Debts, Assets, &c. at Home and Abroad.

Deduced from authentic Documents, and founded upon practical Experience obtained in the Course of Seven Voyages to India and China,

BY WILLIAM MILBURN, ESQ.

OF THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SERVICE.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

LONDON:

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE ROBERT, EARL OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROUL, &c. &c.

My Lord,

Presuming that the following Work will interest every one connected with the affairs and commerce of the East Indies, to whom can it be inscribed with so much propriety as to yourself? Placed so conspicuously as your Lordship is in the Councils of His Majesty, no one at this important crisis participates more largely in all that relates to our Eastern possessions, and no one is, therefore, better qualified to decide upon its merits.

Were I to revert to the high and illustrious office your Lordship, so honourably to yourself, and so advantageously to the Empire, filled in the Eastern world, I should not fear the imputation of flattery, while the records of the East India Company remain in existence, and their executive body bear so just and ample a testimony to your ability and worth:—"Your administration in India was distinguished by wisdom and energy, mildness and integrity; your intelligence extended to all its concerns, commercial, civil, and military; and your judgment, zeal, and activity in the public service were unrivalled."

My Lord, with the world at large would I, humbly and diffidently, thus publicly offer my tribute of respect for your Lordship's character and conduct; but grateful to my feelings will it ever be to acknowledge the many instances of favour

and protection I have privately had the honour of receiving from you. In presenting, therefore, to your Lordship's candour the performance to which many years of my life have been dedicated, I entreat that it may be accepted by your Lordship as an evidence of my gratitude and regard.

I have the honour to be, with the utmost respect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most faithful and devoted Servant,

WILLIAM MILBURN.

134, LEADENHALL STREET,
March 25, 1813.

PREFACE.

THE commercial concerns of the extensive countries within the limits of the East India Company's charter are so little known in Great Britain, that any attempt to elucidate them, must be always acceptable, but more particularly so at the present time, when the public attention is directed to the consideration of East India affairs.

The materials of which this work is composed, have been collected during a period of twenty-five years actively employed in the sea service of the Company, and in commercial pursuits in England immediately connected with it. During the above period, the Author performed seven voyages to and from the East Indies and China, and had the benefit of repeatedly visiting the principal places referred to in the work. These opportunities were well calculated to qualify him for the task he has undertaken; and with what success he has performed it, is now submitted to the judgment of the public. It has been his aim through the whole to render every thing in the numerous subjects it comprehends, as plain and intelligible as possible.

The geographical and historical matter has been drawn from the best and latest writers, and the Author has endeavoured to be accurate without being too diffuse.

The statements of the relative value of the coins, weights, and measures were made from personal observations at the different places the Author has visited, from the authorities of such as have treated on these subjects before him, and from the kind assistance of various friends conversant therein. He has to regret, however, that they are less perfect than he could wish, from the want of a fixed standard even at the principal settlements. Here it may be necessary to remark that Indian accounts are kept in lacs of one hundred thousand each: thus, £1,234,567 would be stated in rupees 12,34,567:—twelve lacs, thirty-four thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven rupees.

The statements of duties, and the various regulations in the shipping and commercial departments of the principal settlements, have been brought down to the latest period; and as observations upon the provisions and refreshments procurable at the various places, must be admitted to be essentially necessary to those connected with the commerce of the East Indies, particular care has also been taken to give a correct detail of them.

The lists of European and other commodities suitable to the markets at the British Presidencies are made up from actual transactions. Those of Bombay will appear more extensive than at the other settlements. The Author's connexions were chiefly there; and the

calamitous fire, which a few years since destroyed the warehouses of the merchants, made the orders from that settlement more numerous. By a reference to these lists it will be seen that there is scarcely an article manufactured in Great Britain, or any other part of Europe, but what is carried in considerable quantities to India in the investments of the Commanders and Officers in the Company's service.

The directions for chusing the various productions of India and China are given from the best authorities; and the quantities imported and sold, will enable the merchant to ascertain, with a great degree of accuracy, the demand for each article, and the price it has generally borne at the Company's sales.

The trade from port to port in India, carried on by Native or European merchants resident there, commonly called the Country Trade, is fully shewn by numerous tables: and from the lists of the articles which compose the imports and exports, it will be seen that the productions of the western hemisphere bear but a very small proportion in this trade.

The commerce carried on by Foreigners with the British Settlements is extremely beneficial to the latter, the greater part of the imports consisting of treasure, and the exports of the manufactures of England. The articles imported, are principally wines, spirits, naval stores, and metals, interfering in a very small degree with the trade carried on by the East India Company, or the Commanders and Officers in their service.

In stating the rise and progress of the commerce carried on with India and China by the various nations of Europe, the best authorities have been consulted, and the Author has entered into a detail of their commercial transactions, particularly those of the English, to a much greater extent than has hitherto been done. It was intended to close the account of the English East India Company with a detail of the particular branches of their service at home, the benefits resulting to individuals belonging to their numerous establishments, and the internal arrangement of the various departments; but as delays have already occurred in the publication of this work, and it seems particularly called for at the present juncture, it has been judged best to give the public that part of it which is now ready, and to reserve what remains for a future opportunity.

It will easily be seen that a work of this nature required great labour and attention, diligent research, and persevering enquiry, to render it worthy of public attention; and the Author, as he has already stated, has had the advantage of many years' experience. Having thus briefly acquainted the reader with the nature of it, it is only necessary to add, that it was begun, and has been carried on, under circumstances very adverse to such an undertaking; and should it experience the public patronage, the Author will think himself happy in having contributed to the commercial interests of the empire. A work so arduous and complicated can hardly be thought to be without errors; the Author, therefore, upon this point claims the indulgent candour of his reader.

INTRODUCTION.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE COMMERCE

BETWEEN

ENGLAND AND THE EAST INDIES.

THE advantages which Great Britain has derived from its commerce with the East Indies for upwards of two centuries, by the immense wealth it has introduced into the country, the large pecuniary supplies it has afforded the Government, and the assistance it has given to her naval power, to which her exaltation among the nations may be attributed, are so truly beneficial, that it will not be thought an unimportant object in the commencement of this work to endeavour to trace its rise and progress, and to place in a clear light the present situation of so essential a branch of the national trade.

Some historians allege that the East Indies were not unknown to Britons in very ancient times.

William of Malmesbury relates that in the year 883, Sighelmus, Bishop of Sherborne in Dorsetshire, being sent by King Alfred to Rome with presents to the Pope, proceeded from thence to the East Indies, to visit the tomb of St. Thomas at Meliapour, by whose means the English nation had an early view of the riches of those countries, in the spices and jewels which the Bishop brought back with him.

With respect to the importation of the manufactures and productions of the East into Europe antecedent to the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, we find that in the thirteenth century the Mahometan Moors made a conquest of the greater part of the Peninsula of India, as well as of the most valuable of the Spice Islands; and having engrossed the commerce of those countries, they transmitted, during that and the two following centuries, the rich merchandise of Asia for the European markets, chiefly from Aden in Arabia, by the Red Sea to Suez, from whence it was conveyed upon camels to the Nile, and there shipped for Grand Cairo and Alexandria; and sometimes it was carried from the Persian Gulf to the Euphrates, and afterwards conveyed by caravans to Aleppo. From those places it was dispersed by the Venetian and other European merchants over the western world. England was supplied with Indian commodities by an annual ship from Venice, of great burthen and immense value, which they sold at their own prices. In this condition the commerce remained for a considerable time, without any attempt of the English to participate in so beneficial a trade.

The Portuguese had the credit and good fortune of making the important discovery of a passage by sea to the East Indies. It was soon followed by their acquisition, partly by treaty, but chiefly by conquest, of numerous settlements on the coasts of the peninsula of India and the Eastern Islands, which enabled them to supply the European markets with all kinds of East India goods, which they enjoyed for nearly a century, without any other European nation endeavouring to participate with them in this lucrative branch of commerce, on the ground of their original discovery, by which it was held that all other nations were excluded from a communication with India by the same route.

1497. King Henry VII. fitted out two vessels under the command of John Cabot, a skilful and enterprising navigator, with a view of discovering a north-western passage to India. He proceeded as far as 67° 30 North latitude; but in consequence of the mutinous disposition of his crew, he was obliged to stand to the southward, and in the course of his passage home, he fell in with Newfoundland, and the Continent of North America.

1549. Sebastian, the son of John Cabot, inheriting the idea of his father, that there was a shorter passage to India than round the Cape of Good Hope, persuaded a number of merchants in London to raise a capital of £6000, in shares of £25 each, for the purpose of prosecuting the discovery of a passage to the North-west. They obtained the King's Charter, and in 1553 fitted out a fleet of three ships under Sir Hugh Willoughby, who sailed on the 10th of May. Sir Hugh Willoughby with his crew were all lost. Captain Chancellor, the second in command, arrived at a port in Russia, travelled to the Court of the Czar, or Emperor, and laid the foundation of the present Russia Company.

1576. Previous to this period, very considerable privileges were granted by the Grand Signior for the establishment of a Turkey trade, in consequence of a treaty between England and the Porte. The Turkey or Levant merchants were at this time looked upon as the true East India traders, by means of their factories at Alexandria, Aleppo, Damascus, and the different ports of Egypt and the Turkish dominions. A new channel of trade had also been set on foot through Russia to Persia for raw silk, and Queen Elizabeth had sent letters to the Sophy of Persia, requesting permission for her subjects to trade in his dominions. The Sophy granted them an immunity from tolls or customs on their merchandise, and full protection to their persons and goods.

Mr. Thorne, a London merchant, who had long resided at Seville, and there acquired some knowledge of the East India trade, represented to King Henry VIII. the advantages this kingdom might derive from the eastern commerce. His proposal was to open a passage by the north-west to Tartary and China; and some merchants of London, in expectation of reaping the benefit of this discovery, fitted out two ships under Captain Frobisher, which were unsuccessful in several attempts; and the idea of finding a passage in that direction was rejected, as being hazardous and impracticable.

1577. Sir Francis Drake fitted out an armament at his own expence, consisting of the Pelican under his own command, and four other ships, with which he sailed through the Strait of Magellan into the South Seas, where he did the Spaniards incredible mischief, and acquired an immense booty. On the news of this reaching Spain, a strong force was sent to intercept him in his return; to avoid which, being by losses reduced to a single ship, he determined to proceed home by the Cape of Good Hope. In the course of his passage he touched at Ternate, one of the Molucca Islands, whose King was then at war with the King of Tidore, at the latter of which places the Portuguese had formed a settlement. Sir Francis having afforded the King of Ternate some assistance against his enemies, a treaty of amity and commerce was entered into between them, in which the King agreed to supply the English nation with all the cloves produced in his country; he also, according to the Eastern custom, formally ratified the contract by the delivery of a present. At Ternate Sir Francis took on board a large quantity of cloves, and in February, 1580, departed for

England, where he arrived on the 3d of November following. In this voyage Sir Francis not only established his reputation as the first person who had performed a complete voyage round the world, but he had the honour of being the first who opened a direct commercial intercourse between England and India.

1583. Three English merchants, Fitch, Newberry, and Leedes, travelled overland to India, provided with letters to the King of Cambay, the Emperor of China, &c. They proceeded to Tripoli, from thence to Bagdad, and down the Tigris and Persian Gulf to Ormus, where they embarked for Goa; they then proceeded to Agra, where Leedes entered into the service of the Great Mogul; Newberry died in India; and Fitch proceeded to Ceylon, Bengal, Pegu, Siam, Malacca, and many other parts of the East Indies, in all of which places they found the Portuguese settled, who threw every obstacle in the way of their progress. They were in general received kindly by the natives of the various countries they visited.

1586. Captain Cavendish commenced his voyage round the globe, sailed from Plymouth, the 21st of July, arrived at the Cape de Verd Islands in September, 1586, and entered the Straits of Magellan the 7th of January, 1587. He coasted along to the northward, then proceeded to the Ladrones, where he arrived on the 3d of January, 1588, and by the 6th of March passed the Straits of Sunda, and arrived at Plymouth on the 9th of September, 1588, by the way of the Cape of Good Hope. This was the second voyage round the world performed by the English.

1587. England at this period was at war with Spain and Portugal. Sir Francis Drake captured, near the Azores, a Portuguese carrack from the East Indies, and brought her to England. The papers of this ship afforded so much information as to the value of the trade, and the mode of conducting it, that Camden considers them to have furnished the first idea of establishing a trade thither from England.

1588. The Spaniards complained of the English having infringed their right by frequenting the Indian seas, alluding to Sir Francis Drake sailing round the globe. Queen Elizabeth replied, "It is as lawful for my subjects to do this as the Spaniards, since the sea and air are common to all men."

1591. The voyages undertaken by Sir Francis Drake and Captain Cavendish, though more for the purpose of annoying and distressing the enemy, and profiting by the booty, than with a view to commercial objects, afforded such an insight into the trade of India, as, combined with the information procured from others, who had visited that country by circuitous routes, induced some merchants of London to set on foot a voyage thither, direct by the way of the Cape of Good Hope, in defiance of the claims of the Portuguese to the exclusive right to the navigation by that route. This voyage was undertaken with three ships, the Penelope, the Merchant Royal, and the Edward Bonaventure, under the command of Mr. George Raymond and Mr. James Lancaster; and although its principal object was to establish a commercial intercourse between the two countries, the advantages of privateering were still kept in view. In their passage to the Cape they were successful in capturing several Portuguese ships; but this occasioned so much delay, that they had to encounter the difficulties of weathering the Cape in the most inclement season; in addition to which, their crews were so sickly, that they were obliged to send back the Merchant Royal. The other two ships pursued their voyage, but soon after parted company in a gale of wind; and the Penelope with Captain Raymond was never more heard of. Captain Lancaster reached the Indies, and took in pepper at Sumatra; but, owing to the sickly state of his crew, could not reach the Moluccas. On his return home, being in want of provisions, he made for the West Indies, where, whilst himself and the chief of the crew were on shore upon an uninhabited island, in search of means for supplying their wants, the remainder ran away with the ship. Here he continued some time, till at length he was relieved, and brought home; but in the interim most of his crew had perished.